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THE CLAIMS OF THE HOUR

BY MALTBI E. D. BABCOCK

LAYMEN'S MISSIONARY MOVEMENT

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An address dolivered at the Ecumenical Missionary Conference,
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By
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The Claims of the Hour

To a Christian an opportunity is a claim. If I saw a man hungry and could give him bread, if I saw a man wandering from the road and could show him the way, that chance would be a claim; that opportunity, an obligation. Why do we read Christ "must be lifted up"? Because a man's need awakened Christ's love, a love that must save by a necessity of its own. The opportunity created the obligation. Why did Paul say: "I must see Rome"? Was he coerced? He had to impart something, because he had something to impart. "Woe is me," said he. Jesus Christ could turn Saul into Paul, and Paul had nothing to say about it to men who need what Jesus Christ did for Saul. "That I may impart." Men were weak morally. Paul had power. Men were in darkness, and Paul knew the light. Men were in degradation and despair, and Paul knew Jesus Christ. What else could he do as a Christian? I must see Rome; and if there is no other way to get me there, fasten your chains on my wrists and take me there as a prisoner, for I must see Rome that I may impart! I am a debtor to the Greek, the barbarian, the Jew, or to anybody who has not what I have. That is Christian chivalry. Show it the need and it leaps.

Opportunity is obligation, obligation is inspiration, and inspiration is in-spiration, which means that the spirit of Christ is in me. "Because I live ye shall live also," and because I love ye shall love also, and you shall love my way. That is why Paul says, Woe is me if I preach not the gospel to the man who does not know it. Where would Paul be to-day if he were here with us? He would be in the thin red line in the foreign field, at the forefront of the battle, where it meets the great black, broad line. I was ever a fighter—Paul did not say it that way—but in effect he said: "It is my ambition to fight where no one else has ever drawn a sword; let me be the first runner to go ahead with the news of life. Let me build where no one else has built."

Because Christian opportunity is a claim, it is inescapable. If Jesus is much to me, I am logically bound to feel the compulsion of that love, sweeping into line every man who needs what Jesus can do. Intensity and extensity are wrapped up together. Intense devotion to Jesus Christ means extensive sympathies. If a light is bright it will shine a long way. Only a precious ointment can fill a whole house with its fragrance, but an exceedingly precious ointment will do so. If Jesus Christ is everything to me, I know he can be everything to any man, and as much as in me lies I will take Christ to the last man. And because I know it I have got the woe resting upon me if I will not do all that is in me to let the last man who does not know Jesus Christ divide with me. There is no escape from this logic. If I love Jesus Christ—which means if I am loyal to Him—never let clouds disturb the stars; never

let feelings run away with conviction. If I love Jesus Christ which means if I keep His commandments—I am in touch with everybody to the end of the earth who needs Him, and I can not take a washbowl and wash my hands and say that you must excuse me from this matter. Jesus Christ said: “Ye are my witnesses,” beginning at Jerusalem. That is your own city. I believe in city missions, of course. So does every foreign missionary. Christ said: “Ye are to be my witnesses in all Judea,” and that is home missions, “and in Samaria.” What is that? That is the particular tribe or nation that you do not like. “In Jerusalem and all Judea and Samaria, *and to the uttermost parts of the earth!*” And that takes in the last man. See Jesus, before He goes to His Father’s side, with His hand outstretched and pointing to the uttermost part of the earth! Let the Church never forget that gesture. I tell you, fellow-Christians, your love has got a broken wing if it can not fly across the ocean.

Now the claims. There are two that I would emphasize: Fidelity and fairness. Fidelity relates you to God, and fairness to your brother. Think of fidelity. Can you think of a substitute for it? There is none. Sentiment, enthusiasm, eloquence must not evaporate in words, unless they crystallize in deeds. “Lord, I am ready to die with thee,” said Peter. “Peter, do not talk so fast, or you will get in trouble!” It is not what a man says, but what he does that counts. No professions of love are worth anything without proof of loyalty. “Why call ye me Lord, Lord, but do not the things I say?” Fidelity is limitless obedience. Remember, fellow-Christians,

how wide was the horizon of Jesus. Our horizon widens from cradle to home, school, city, country, and with some, perhaps, to the last man. But to Jesus the outside rim of the earth was the first horizon that He saw, and the last. When He was born good tidings came unto whom—the Jews? “Unto all people.” “Among all nations;” “throughout the whole world”; “to every creature”; “to the uttermost part of the earth,” are Christ’s words. “Go ye into all the world,” is His limitless command, His boundless expectation. Fidelity means that His horizon is your horizon, His thought your thought, His ways your ways. Disobedience is infidelity. What do you make of yourself, my brother, when you do not believe in foreign missions, and yet say you believe in Jesus? Your garments smell of smoke. You are disloyal and disobedient. The early Church understood. It went everywhere preaching the gospel, and it was but a few years before Paul said the gospel had been trumpeted throughout the world—the inhabited world, the ecumenical world. Then what happened? The Church having won its fight, came under the curse of Sodom: “pride and fullness of bread and abundance of idleness.” The mountain stream that came down from the tops of the hills became a stagnant pool on the plain. Living for itself in the world and of the world, instead of in the world and for the world, the Church went into degeneration and deformation, and the Dark Ages came. O, if the early Church could only have remembered Jewish history. What was the promise to Abraham? “I will bless you,” but you must be a blessing to all nations. What is the sixty-seventh

Psalm but asking God to bless us "that thy way may be known on earth." How annoyed Jonah was, actually angry because God would have mercy on somebody who was not a Jew. Then when Paul was preaching in Jerusalem, you remember, he said: "I am going to preach to the Gentiles," and the Jews caught up the dust and threw it in the air, crying: "Away with such a pestilential fellow." All this is losing life for not using it. God took the Jewish candle out of the candlestick because it would not be the light of the world, and the nation went into darkness. It was for the same reason that the Church went into the Dark Ages. It turned its candle into a dark lantern, and said, "as long as I may see the light I do not care who is in the dark." Fellow-Christians, can we doubt our Master's will? Ye are the light of your families? I hope so. "Ye are the light of the world!" You are to shine so that the last man shall have some sight of your candle. Ye are the salt of the Church? No; "ye are the salt of the earth." Go put your light in the darkness; go rub your salt into decay. That is what we are for. Go where darkness and decay are worst. When Jesus said "love your neighbor," he meant the man who needs you. O, the wonderful story of the good Samaritan! The man in need is your neighbor. And who is your nearest neighbor? Your neediest neighbor. It may be some child-widow in India is your nearest neighbor. It may be some famine-stricken laborer in India; some groping soul in Africa is your nearest neighbor, because just now in the interest of God's kingdom he needs you more than your Sunday-school class needs you. It may be, I do not know.

Everyone of us Christians will go some day—not before the great white throne, never dream it; you belong to Jesus Christ, and there is, therefore, now no judgment to the man whose hand is in Christ's—but before your Master, as a servant to give an account of your fidelity, of how you used your tools, your talents. And what is your chief trust, what your most invaluable talent? It is your personal knowledge of Jesus Christ. I am to give an account before my Master for what I did in this world, with what I knew about Him. Do not doubt it. "What shall I do with Jesus that is called the Christ?" Ask, rather, "what am I doing *now* with Jesus that is called the Christ?"

So much for fidelity. The next claim and the other claim is fairness, and that makes my blood stir; for the old Saxon, and Angle, and Dane, and Teuton is in my blood—is he not in yours? I know he is. I had good old pagan ancestry, believe me. You can see some of their memorials, their altars, and tombs at old Stonehenge to-day. They believed in human sacrifices. They used to take fair young girls and put them in wicker crates and shoot arrows at them to see which way their blood would run, that they might know what the gods were thinking about and how battles would turn out. And those were my ancestors. O, you blue-eyed and fair-haired men and women, proud of your Scotch, and Irish, and German blood, remember and honor the foreign missionaries Augustine, Paulinus, Patricius, Colomba, Gallus! They were foreign missionaries who went out years ago to men and women who were wild barbarians, pagans of the north, my

ancestors, and preached to them the gospel of Jesus Christ. And I am the heir of their sacrifice, my knowledge of Christ is their gift to me. What a beautiful incident that was of Paulinus. It was near old York, men of New York. A great company was gathered in a great hall. A stranger came and asked for a chance to speak to them. His name was Paulinus—little Paul—and men said, "Shall he speak?" and an old Thane said: "What is this life we are living? Where did we come from? Where are we going? We do not know. It is as though a little sparrow flew into our banquet hall on a cold winter night out of the dark, circled around, and then flew out again. That is our life. We do not know where we came from. We stay here for a little while, and then out into the dark we go. If this stranger can tell us anything, let him be heard." And then Paulinus told them what he knew, and how life lighted up into meaning, and hope, and joy in the presence of Jesus. And that is where our Christianity started. We are the children of the converts of foreign missionaries, and I tell you that fairness means that I must do to others as men once did for me. There are millions to-day in Africa, India, and the islands of the sea that have just as good a right before God to know the best there is in life, as you and I have. Why do we not tell them? Is it fair that there should be millions of children born in the next generation to open their eyes in heathen darkness, when you and I opened our eyes in the light of a Christian day? You are darkening the lives of millions of unborn children by not putting the light of the love of Jesus Christ before the faces of their fathers and mothers.

You know that as well as I do. I will not talk of the horrors that belong to pagan religion, of the degradation of womanhood, of the deformation of childhood. You and I know what Jesus has been to us. Shall we not tell it to them that are in darkness? What if your boy recovered from diphtheria because your doctor knew of anti-toxine; if within twelve hours after the remedy was given him the labored breathing got more easy, the terrible film began to dry up and slough off, and the word came "he is all right: the antitoxine has done its work," how would you bless God! But there in a village yonder is a man whose boy has diphtheria, and you know it. They are holding the poor gasping child over fires of charcoal and lime, trying in the old way to help him to breathe, and you let him suffocate in the old way, and let his father and mother break their hearts in the old way. What saved your boy would save that boy. Fellow-Christians, we must not walk in a vain show. We must not deceive ourselves. "God is not mocked." We thank God that we are not as other men are, and that we are safe in bed with our children, but what are our thanks to God without the fidelity of obedience and the fairness of brotherly love?

Let me ask, in closing, what is the opportunity? It is a home one as well as a foreign. What the unchristian world at home in America and England needs is a heroic advance of Christian missions. Why? Because there is no way in which the Church can so move thoughtless men and women as to make an advance by new faith and new fidelity into the heathen world for Jesus's sake and for principle. James Rus-

sell Lowell said: "You can never know a man's moral genuineness until you know what he will do for a principle." When the world sees the spirit of Christ in Christians, it will take knowledge, it will acknowledge that they have been with Jesus. The Church needs the actual vitalization, the vital reaction of daring deeds for God. Look at the Moravian Church—the most missionary of churches, but with a perpetual revival at home. "Go ye into all the world, and lo, I am with you." Our Lord is not with us because we do not go! And the heathen world is our opportunity as never before in the world's history. There are men here who remember fifty years ago praying for open doors. To-day they are open. You have been praying for open Bibles, and they are open to-day in over 400 languages. You have prayed for open hearts. See how the great "Volunteer Movement" has sprung up in the colleges. "Here are we, thousands of your sons and daughters; send us, we are ready to go." Korea has spurned Buddhism, and is waiting. The ancient faith is tottering in India. The door of China is open to America as it is to no other nation. The hand of God must have held back the reform movement in China a few years ago, because the Christian Church had not enough workers to supply its needs. The "yellow peril" is our golden opportunity. What is opportunity; *ob-portus*, at the gate. The apostle said to the lame man, "at the beautiful gate": "Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have give I thee; in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, rise up and walk." Let the Christian Church say to-day to poor, lame, foot-bound China: "I have no

thought for your gold or silver, but I come in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, and bid you rise up and walk."

Fellow-Christians, we can never be the same after this Conference. We are either going back into willful disobedience, or we are going on into newer and truer service. Pray as never before. Give as never before. If you can not go, can you not send your substitute? If not a missionary, support a native teacher, a worker, a helper. Fifty cents a week will support a helper. If any two or three of you agree on any one man, Jesus will be with you, and you can together send a substitute. We know the need as never before, and God's limitless power. We know how many volunteers are ready to go, and how the fields are calling for them. Face your opportunity; feel its obligation, feel its inspiration, and say: "Lord Jesus, I can not go myself, but here is my substitute; use him, and let me serve Thee as the angels do night and day, he in the night in China, and I in the day in America."

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